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ABSTRACT

The major point of this address is that education for Black Americans cannot be viewed apart from the political, economic, and social structures of American society. More attention must be devoted to understanding the exercise of political power, informed and accurate policy analysis, and the relationship of the worker to modern industry. Income factors, the economy, the character of work and of the work force are explored. It is proposed that thoughts about the type of training and education black children should receive in school must be redirected. At the same time the causes of discrimination in all facets of American society should be attacked. A list of actions to be taken to improve the lot of those in the black community is included. (Author/BS)

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"CURRENT ISSUES AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY"

PRESENTED TO

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES THAT IMPACT ON THE

BLACK COMMUNITY

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MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, A CHINESE SAGE SAID: "WHEN PLANNING FOR A YEAR, PLANT CORN. WHEN PLANNING FOR A DECADE, PLANT TREES. WHEN PLANNING FOR A LIFE, TRAIN AND EDUCATE PEOPLE." ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS LATER, W.E.B. DUBOIS DISCUSSED THE CONTROVERSY AND TWO STREAMS OF THOUGHT WHICH WERE TO SHAPE THE EDUCATION OF BLACKS IN AMERICA. THE FIRST ARGUMENT GREW OUT OF THE NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE AND ARGUED THAT THE MATTER OF MAN'S EARNING A LIVING MUST BE IMPORTANT, BUT SURELY IT CAN NEVER BE SO IMPORTANT AS THE MAN HIMSELF. THUS THE ECONOMIC ADAPTATION OF THE NEGRO IN THE SOUTH MUST BE SUBORDINATED TO THE GREAT NECESSITY OF TEACHING LIFE AND CULTURE. THE SOUTH, AND MORE ESPECIALLY THE NEGRO MUST HAVE TRAINED AND EDUCATED LEADERSHIP IF CIVILIZATION WAS TO SURVIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRACTICAL MEN WHO LOOKED AT THE SOUTH AFTER THE WAR SAID: THIS IS AN INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS AGE. WE ARE ON THE THRESHHOLD OF AN ECONOMIC EXPANSION SUCH AS THE WORLD HAS NEVER KNOWN. WHATEVER HUMAN CIVILIZATION HAS BEEN OR MAY BECOME, TODAY IT IS INDUSTRY. WHAT WAS NEEDED THEN WAS THAT THE NEGRO FIRST SHOULD BE MADE THE INTELLIGENT LABORER, THE TRAINED FARMER, THE SKILLED ARTISAN OF THE SOUTH. ONCE HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED THIS STEP IN THE ECONOMIC WORLD, AND THE LADDER WAS SET FOR HIS CLIMBING, HIS FUTURE WOULD BE ASSURED, AND ASSURED ON AN ECONOMIC FOUNDATION WHICH WOULD BE IMMOVALBE. ALL ELSE IS HIS DEVELOPMENT. LET US HAVE, THEREFORE, NOT COLLEGES BUT SCHOOLS TO TEACH THE TECHNIQUE OF INDUSTRY AND TO MAKE MEN

LEARN BY DOING."

THESE WERE THE OPPOSING ARGUMENTS. THEY WERE REAL ARGUMENTS. THEY WERE SET FORTH BY MEN, EARNEST MEN, BOTH BLACK AND WHITE, PHILANTHROPIST AND TEACHER, STATESMAN AND SEER. THE CONTROVERSY WAS BITTER. THE NEGRO RACE AND THEIR FRIENDS WERE SPLIT IN TWAIN BY THE INTENSITY OF THEIR FEELING. TODAY THAT ARGUMENT HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED ALTHOUGH THE WORDS HAVE CHANGED, THE FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES REMAIN.

SOMETIME LATER, DUBOIS ISSUED HIS CALL FOR THE EDUCATION OF MEN, NOT SLAVES:

> THE NEGRO RACE, LIKE ALL RACES, IS GOING TO BE SERVED BY ITS EXCEPTIONAL MEN....NOW THE TRAINING OF MEN IS A DIFFICULT AND INTRICATE TASK. ITS TECHNIQUE IS A MATTER FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS, BUT ITS OBJECT IS FOR THE VISION OF SEERS. IF WE MAKE MONEY THE OBJECT OF MAN-TRAINING, WE SHALL DEVELOP MONEY-MAKERS, BUT NOT NECESSARILY MEN; IF WE MAKE TECHNICAL SKILL THE OBJECT OF EDUCATION, WE MAY POSSESS ARTISANS BUT NOT, IN NATURE, MEN.[1]

NOW IF THE TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF PEOPLE IS WHAT THIS CONFERENCE IS ABOUT, OUR TASK IS AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME RELATIVELY SIMPLE AND INFINITELY COMPLEX. THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY ARE FAMILIAR TO ALL OF US AND NEED NOT BE ENDLESSLY DEBATED AND DISCUSSED IN THIS FORUM: DROP-OUTS,

FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE GRADUATES, INADEQUATE FUNDING AND EROSION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECOME INCREASINGLY NON-WHITE, VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM, THE DEADENING OF THE ABILITY AND WILL TO LEARN, INSENSITIVE AND UNCARING TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS, LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN. WE ALL KNOW THAT A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN INITIATED IN MANY SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO COPE WITH EACH OF THESE PROBLEMS. BUT WE ALSO KNOW THAT THESE PROGRAMS ARE OFTEN TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE. MORE IMPORTANT, WE KNOW THAT COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES TO PREVENT SUCH PROBLEMS ARE USUALLY NOTABLE BY THEIR ABSENCE.

IN HIGHER EDUCATION, WE ALL KNOW THE PENDULUM HAS SWUNG BACK AND THE GAINS MADE BY BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES IN PREDOMINATELY WHITE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE DIMINISHING AND THE SPECIAL EFFORTS TO INCREASE MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGES, GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS ARE UNDER ATTACK IN THE COURTS, FACULTY LOUNGES, LEGISLATURES AND PRIVATE SOCIAL SETTINGS. BLACK COLLEGES, LONG THE BULWARK, THE BASTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR BLACKS ARE UNDERFUNDED, IGNORED, PATRONIZED OR SUBJECT TO OPEN ATTACK FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES. WE HAVE ADEQUATE STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION: WE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ON HOW MANY

GRADUATE, WHAT FIELDS THEY ENTER OR HOW MANY ENTER AND GRADUATE FROM GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS.

BUT EACH OF THESE ISSUES WILL BE DISCUSSED, ANALYZED, DEBATED AND DISCUSSED AGAIN IN THIS AND OTHER CONFERENCES. I SHALL, THEREFORE, NOT DWELL ON THEM. RATHER, I WOULD LIKE TO TALK FOR A FEW MINUTES ABOUT WHAT EDUCATION MUST MEAN FOR BLACKS AND, I MIGHT ADD, FOR OTHER MINORITIES. FROM PRE-SCHOOL THROUGH GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS EDUCATION CANNOT BE VIEWED IN ISOLATION FROM THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES OF THIS SOCIETY. THE DEMONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, INADEQUATE HOUSING, POOR OR NON-EXISTENT MEDICAL CARE AND INADEQUATE EDUCATION ARE ALL AT ROOT INTERRELATED. THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCED AND SHAPED BY THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL POWER. IT IS, THEREFORE, CRUCIAL THAT WE MUST PAY MORE ATTENTION TO UNDERSTANDING THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL POWER, INFORMED AND ACCURATE POLICY ANALYSIS AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE WORKER TO MODERN INDUSTRY AND TO THE MODERN STATE. WE IGNORE THESE RELATIONSHIPS AT OUR OWN PERIL.

THE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS ARE NOT TO BE FOUND BY TACKLING EACH OF THEM INDIVIDUALLY, OR EVEN ALL OF THEM COLLECTIVELY. PROGRAMS FOR MANPOWER TRAINING, FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING, FOR NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, FOR ALTERNATIVE

EDUCATION WILL BENEFIT SOME IN THE SHORT RUN AND WILL ENABLE A FEW TO BREAK THROUGH THE BOUNDARIES OF CASTE AND CLASS WHICH ENTRAP SO MANY MINORITY CITIZENS. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SUCH PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED OR LEFT UNSUPPORTED. THEY ARE VITAL STRATEGIES FOR ALLEVIATING THE DISADVANTAGES AND OBSTACLES FACED DIRECTLY BY MANY OF US, AND INDIRECTLY BY ALL OF US. HOWEVER, IN TERMS OF POLICY FORMATION AND STRUCTURAL REFORM, SUCH PROGRAMS ARE BAND-AIDS WHICH CAN COVER UP BUT NOT EFFECTIVELY TREAT THE WOUNDS WHICH HURT AND THREATEN TO DESTROY US.

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE WHICH WAS FOUNDED ON THE WORK ETHIC -- IN A BELIEF THAT THROUGH HARD WORK AND APPLICATION OF INDIVIDUAL TALENTS, ONE COULD EARN A DECENT LIVING AND MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY. YET THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE PRESENTLY LIVE TOO OFTEN EMPHASIZES NOT WHAT A PERSON DOES, BUT WHAT HE OR SHE IS ABLE TO GET FOR DOING IT. RESPECT AND HUMAN DIGNITY ARE TOO OFTEN BASED ON INCOME, THE ATTAINMENT OF A DECENT QUALITY OF LIFE -- MEANINGFUL AND FULFILLING WORK, DECENT HOMES AND SCHOOLS — IS BASED ON INCOME. BUT INCOME IS NOT BASED ON HOW HARD OR HOW LONG A PERSON WORKS, OR WANTS TO WORK; IT IS BASED ON FAMILY BACKGROUND, SOCIAL ADVANTAGES, AND A SCORE OF OTHER UNDEMOCRATIC VARIABLES.

THE REAL ISSUE THEN BECOMES BRINGING UNDER DEMOCRATIC CONTROL THE VARIABLES THAT DETERMINE THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF ALL PEOPLE IN THIS SOCIETY. THE FACT

IS THAT AN INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF AMERICANS ARE SEEKING TO SURVIVE TODAY AT AN INCOME LEVEL INSUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN EVEN THE "LOWEST" STANDARD OF LIVING. THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS ESTIMATED BUDGET LEVEL NEEDED TO MAINTAIN A "LOWER" STANDARD OF LIVING IN 1975 WAS $9,588. OVER HALF (54%) OF ALL BLACK FAMILIES, AND ONE-THIRD OF ALL WHITE FAMILIES FELL BELOW THIS LEVEL.

AS OF JUNE, 1976, THERE WERE 10.8 MILLION BLACKS IN THE LABOR FORCE OUT OF A TOTAL LABOR POOL OF 94.6 MILLION. BLACKS WERE HOLDING 9.4 MILLION JOBS AND 1.5 MILLION WERE OFFICIALLY LISTED AS UNEMPLOYED. BLACKS THUS ACCOUNTED FOR 11.4 PERCENT OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE; 10.7 PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT AND 20.3 PERCENT OF ALL UNEMPLOYED PERSONS. BLACK WORKERS STILL TEND TO HAVE A DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF THE JOBS IN LOW WAGE INDUSTRIES AND TO BE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN HIGH WAGE INDUSTRIES.[2]

AND WHAT OF BLACK BUSINESS? THE LATEST AVAILABLE FIGURES FOR THE NATION'S 100 LEADING BLACK BUSINESS FIRMS SHOWED A DECREASE IN REVENUES IN 1975 of 7.6 PERCENT, AND BLACK ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE ESTIMATES THAT THERE WAS A 11.8 PERCENT DECLINE IN 1976 WITH INFLATION TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACK BUSINESS TO EXPAND TO WIDER MARKETS ARE FRUSTRATED BY SUCH PROBLEMS AS THEIR SMALL SIZES, AND LACK OF CAPITAL AND EXPERTISE. MARKET EXPANSION THROUGH SUCH MEANS AS GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS HAS BEEN DISCOURAGING AT BEST. IN FISCAL YEAR 1975,

LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE DOLLAR VALUE OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS WAS RECEIVED BY MINORITY BUSINESSES.

OF COURSE, THE FAILURE OF BLACK WORKERS AND BUSINESSMEN TO GAIN A FOOTHOLD IN THE ECONOMIC SUPERSTRUCTURE OF OUR SOCIETY IS NOT SOLELY, OR EVEN MAINLY, THE FAULT OF THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOLS -- OR ITS MODERN DAY EQUIVALENT, CAREER EDUCATION. THE GROWTH OF MONOPOLISTIC INDUSTRIES, OR TREMENDOUS ACCUMULATIONS OF CAPITAL IN FEW HANDS, OF CREDIT SYSTEMS WHICH ROUTINELY PRACTICE REDLINING AND OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION IS NOT THE FAULT OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. AS DUBOIS COMMENTED: "SCHOOLS CANNOT TEACH AS AN ART AND TRADE THAT WHICH IS A PHILOSOPHY, A GOVERNMENT OF MEN, AN ORGANIZATION OF CIVILIZATION." THIS IS NOT THE CURRICULUM OF THE TRADE SCHOOL OR THE EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM.

FROM A COMPREHENSIVE, GLOBAL OUTLOOK, WE CAN NOW BEGIN TO ASSESS THE PROBLEMS OF OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND FORMULATE THE POLICIES THAT SHOULD GUIDE OUR EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL, QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUTH. WE MUST DEFINE THE GOALS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN POLICY-ORIENTED TERMS IF WE ARE TO BREAK FREE OF THE MEETING MODALITY IN WHICH WE ARE CURRENTLY MIRED, AND MOVE ON TO AN ACTION MODALITY BASED ON A CONSENSUS OF THE TYPE OF POLICIES WE OUGHT TO BE FOLLOWING.

WHAT ARE WE EDUCATING FOR? WE MUST STRIVE FOR WHAT DUBOIS CALLED "A TRAINING WHICH WILL ENABLE (YOUTH) TO TAKE SOME DEFINITE AND INTELLIGENT PART IN THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND IN THE FURNISHING OF HUMAN SERVICES AND IN THE DEMOCRATIC DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME SO AS TO BUILD CIVILIZATION, ENCOURAGE INITIATIVE, REWARD EFFORT AND SUPPORT LIFE." WE MUST PROVIDE THEM WITH TRAINING AS HUMAN BEINGS IN GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AND THEN WITH TECHNICAL TRAINING TO GUIDE AND DO A SPECIFIC PART OF THE WORLD'S WORK. IN ORDER TO DEVELOP SUCH AN EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK, IT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF WORK IN BOTH TODAY'S WORLD AND TOMORROW'S WORLD.

OURS IS NO LONGER AN ECONOMY IN WHICH HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE BACKBONE OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION. BARBARA SIZEMORE REMINDS US THAT THE LANGUAGE OF THE 21ST CENTURY IS NOT ENGLISH, BUT MATHEMATICS. MECHANIZATION AND COMPUTERIZATION ARE TAKING OVER THE FUNCTIONS OF MANUFACTURING THAT ONCE REQUIRED MILLIONS OF PERSON-HOURS. THE AREA OF GROWTH FOR HUMAN EMPLOYMENT IS THE AREA OF HUMAN SERVICE DELIVERY. TODAY 64 OUT OF EVERY 100 JOBS ARE IN THIS AREA; BY 1980 IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 70% OF ALL WORKERS WILL BE EMPLOYED IN THE SERVICE AREA. THIS GROWING FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT INCORPORATES HUMAN SERVICES SUCH AS EDUCATION, MEDICAL CARE AND SOCIAL WELFARE AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICE SUCH AS RESEARCH PLANNING, COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY, ETC. THE SKILLS NEEDED BY THOSE

PEOPLE WHO WILL FILL THESE KINDS OF JOBS ARE INTERACTIVE SKILLS AS WELL AS TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS.

THERE ARE OTHER CHANGES IN THE CHARACTER OF WORK AND OF THE WORK FORCE OF WHICH WE NEED TO BE AWARE. FEWER PEOPLE ARE SELF-EMPLOYED THAN WAS THE CASE SEVERAL DECADES AGO. IN 1940 26% OF THE WORK FORCE WAS SELF-EMPLOYED; in 1970 ONLY 10% WAS SELF-EMPLOYED. MEANWHILE, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. IN 1947, LESS THAN 5.5 MILLION PEOPLE WORKED FOR GOVERNMENT. IN 1970, THIS NUMBER HAD INCREASED TO 13 MILLION, OR ONE OUT OF EVERY SIX EMPLOYEES. THE LARGEST INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT OCCURRED ON THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS, WHERE THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES HAS INCREASED 250%. FINALLY, THE IMPORTANCE OF PART-TIME WORKERS TO THE NATION'S ECONOMY HAS GROWN. OVER THREE MILLION FULLTIME WORKERS ALSO MOONLIGHT PARTTIME; A TOTAL OF 12.4 MILLION PEOPLE WORK PART-TIME AND MILLIONS MORE DO OCCASIONAL WORK.[3]

THE FACT THAT MORE AND MORE ADULTS ARE SEEKING PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT MEANS THAT FEWER AND FEWER YOUNG PEOPLE SEEKING SUCH JOBS CAN FIND WORK. THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE ESTIMATES THAT CLOSE TO 60 PERCENT OF ALL BLACK TEENAGERS WHO WANTED JOBS IN 1976 COULD NOT FIND WORK. MORE THAN 35 PERCENT OF BLACK TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE NOT BEEN IN THE LABOR FORCE SINCE 1950. WHILE UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES FOR OTHER GROUPS ARE NOT AS HIGH AS THEY ARE FOR BLACK YOUTH, THE FACT IS THAT

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUTH ARE REACHING ADULTHOOD WITHOUT HAVING ACQUIRED THE WORK EXPERIENCE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREERS AS ADULTS. IF CURRENT JOB TRENDS CONTINUE, THOUSANDS MORE ARE EMPLOYED IN OCCUPATIONS WHICH IN THE NEAR FUTURE MAY BE EXTINCT.

IT IS CLEAR THAT WE MUST REDIRECT OUR THINKING ABOUT THE TYPE OF TRAINING OUR CHILDREN SHOULD RECEIVE IN SCHOOL WHILE CONCURRENTLY ATTACKING THE CAUSES OF SYSTEMATIC DISCRIMINATION IN OUR SOCIETY -- IN SCHOOLS, IN JOBS, IN ALL THREADS OF OUR NATION'S FABRIC. WE NEED WHAT DUBOIS CALLED THE EDUCATION OF MEN, N T SLAVES. WE NEED TO TRAIN STUDENTS WHO ARE CAPABLE OF NOT ONLY FITTING INTO THE EXISTING SOCIETY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY, BUT WHO ARE ALSO CAPABLE OF CHANGING IT.

HAVE WE SUCCEEDED IN BUILDING AN INTELLIGENT WORKING CLASS? A CORPS OF EDUCATED AND DEDICATED LEADERSHIP TO ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS?

DUBOIS' ASSESSMENT OF THE BLACK COLLEGE GRADUATE IN 1930 WAS THAT "THE AVERAGE NEGRO UNDERGRADUATE HAS SWALLOWED HOOK, LINE AND SINKER, THE DEAD BAIT OF THE WHITE UNDERGRADUATE, WHO, BORN IN AN INDUSTRIAL MACHINE, DOES NOT HAVE TO THINK, AND DOES NOT THINK." "WE ARE GRADUATING," HE CLAIMED, "YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WITH AN INTENSE AND OVERWHELMING APPETITE FOR WEALTH AND NO REASONABLE WAY OF GRATIFYING IT, NO PHILOSOPHY FOR COUNTERACTING IT."

THESE OBSERVATIONS HAVE BEEN ECHOED BY A NUMBER OF CONTEMPORARY BLACK LEADERS. THE MAYOR OF A MIDWESTERN CITY TELLS OF SPEAKING TO BLACK LAW STUDENTS AT HARVARD, STUDENTS WHO HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST NOTION OF HOW THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR PRESENCE IN THE HALLOWED HALLS OF HARVARD: STUDENTS WHOSE AMBITIONS AND ASPIRATIONS POINT NOT TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, BUT TO COMFORT, WEALTH, STATUS AND PRIVATISM. A FEDERAL JUDGE TELLS A SIMILAR STORY ABOUT STUDENTS IN A MAJOR MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY. A NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COLUMNIST WRITES OF HIS DISILLUSIONMENT AND DESPAIR AFTER TALKING WITH STUDENTS WHO DEVOTE THEIR EFFORTS TO GETTING BY WITH LITTLE OR NO SENSE OF SOCIAL PURPOSE. NOT ALL STUDENTS ARE THIS WAY, BUT FAR TO MANY AND THIS SHOULD CAUSE THOSE OF US IN THIS ROOM NO LITTLE CONCERN.

ALMOST FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE DAYS OF TOTALLY SEGREGATED HIGHER EDUCATION IN AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY'S COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES, W.E.B. DUBOIS RECALLED THE CONTROVERSY THAT RAGED DURING THE RECONSTRUCTION YEARS OVER THE TYPE OF EDUCATION NEEDED FOR AMERICAN BLACKS. ON THE ONE HAND WERE THOSE WHO CLAIMED THAT THE NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE IDEAL OF TEACHING LIFE AND CULTURE IN ORDER TO BUILD A CORE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO COULD PROVIDE TRAINED AND EDUCATED LEADERSHIP TO THE BLACK RACE WAS PARAMOUNT. ON THE OTHER HAND WERE THOSE WHO FELT THAT THE PRIME NECESSITY WAS TO TRAIN A RELIABLE WORKING CLASS OF LABORERS,

FARMERS AND ARTISANS FOR THE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH OF THE SOUTH. IN 1930, AT THE TIME OF HIS ADDRESS, DUBOIS SAW THE CONTROVERSY AS FAR FROM SETTLED. HE CHARGED THAT, "(T)HE NEGRO COLLEGE, ITS TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND GRADUATES, HAVE NOT YET COMPREHENDED THE AGE IN WHICH THEY LIVE: THE TREMENDOUS ORGANIZATION OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, CAPITAL, AND CREDIT WHICH TODAY FORMS A SUPER-ORGANIZATION DOMINATING AND RULING THE UNIVERSE, SUBORDINATING TO ITS ENDS GOVERNMENT, DEMOCRACY, RELIGION, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY; AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORCING INTO THE PLACES OF POWER IN THIS ORGANIZATION AMERICAN BLACK MEN EITHER TO GUIDE OR HELP REFORM IT, EITHER TO INCREASE ITS EFFICIENCY OR MAKE IT A MACHINE TO IMPROVE OUR WELL-BEING, RATHER THAN THE MERCILESS MECHANISM WHICH ENSLAVES US; FOR THIS THE NEGRO COLLEGE HAS TODAY NEITHER PROGRAM NOR INTELLIGENT COMPREHENSION."

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE DECADES SINCE DUBOIS' COMMENT? HAVE WE MASTERED THE ECONOMIC COMPREHENSION, THE INDUSTRIAL FOUNDATION, AND THE POLITICAL STRATEGIES WHICH ALLOW BLACK AMERICANS TO ASSUME POSITIONS OF POWER IN THIS COUNTRY SO AS TO GUIDE POLICY-MAKING, INTIATE REFORMS, INCREASE GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY, AND IMPROVE OUR WELL-BEING? WHAT HAVE WE AS EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS, AS LEADERS AND AS COMMITTED FOLLOWERS DONE TO ADVANCE PROGRAMS?

IN ORDER TO EDUCATE MEN AND WOMEN, RATHER THAN SLAVES, OUR TEACHERS HAVE GOT TO BE ABLE TO IMPART THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO HUMAN BEINGS WHOSE PLACE IN THE WORLD IS TODAY PRECARIOUS AND CRITICAL. THESE TEACHERS MUST REALIZE THAT THE POSSIBILITIES AND ADVANCEMENT OF THOSE HUMAN BEINGS IN THE WORLD WHERE THEY ARE TO LIVE AND EARN A LIVING ARE OF JUST AS MUCH IMPORTANCE IN THE TEACHING PROCESS AS THE CONTENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE TAUGHT. "THE TEACHERS, THEN, CANNOT BE PEDANTS OR DILETTANTES, THEY CANNOT BE MERE TECHNICIANS AND HIGHER ARTISANS, THEY HAVE TO BE SOCIAL STATESMEN AND STATESMEN OF HIGH ORDER." (DUBOIS)

"THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHER IS THE KEY TO GOOD EDUCATION. IF THE TEACHER IS NOT PREPARED, IS NOT HIGHLY MOTIVATED, DOES NOT LOVE LEARNING DOES NOT CARE FOR HIS OR HER STUDENTS, THE EDUCATION WILL BE EMPTY AND OF LOW QUALITY. IF THE TEACHER IS NOT INFORMED, NEITHER WILL THE STUDENTS BE INFORMED. LEARNING OCCURS WHEN PEOPLE HAVE SOME MEASURE OF CONFIDENCE AND HOPE. FOR THE TEACHER, THEN, THE INSTILLING OF HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN STUDENTS IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL. FOR BLACK STUDENTS, THE COMBINATION OF BOTH AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE LEARNING PROCESS IS ESSENTIAL. WITHOUT THE FINE, CONFIDENT DURABILITY OF THE TEACHER, MANY OF THE MAIN VALUES OF CIVILIZATION WILL VERY QUICKLY DISAPPEAR INTO CHAOS." IT IS ONLY WHEN WE REMEMBER THIS THAT WE CAN TRULY UNDERSTAND THAT ALL GOOD EDUCATION IS BOTH PRACTICAL AND LIBERAL.

AND WE MUST ALSO REMEMBER THAT QUALITY EDUCATION IS GUIDED BY IDEALS. DUBOIS INSISTED NEARLY 50 YEARS AGO THAT WE MUST REDIRECT OUR NOTIONS OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND REDESIGN OUR GOALS IN KEEPING WITH THE FOLLOWING IDEALS:

(1) THE IDEAL OF POVERTY - THIS IS THE DIRECT ANTITHESIS OF THE PRESENT IDEAL OF WEALTH. WE CANNOT ALL BE WEALTHY. WE SHOULD NOt ALL BE WEALTHY. "IN AN IDEAL INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION NO PERSON SHOULD HAVE AN INCOME WHICH HE DOES NOT PERSONALLY NEED: NOR WIELD A POWER SOLELY FOR HIS OWN WHIM. IF CIVILIZATION IS TO TURN OUT MILLIONAIRES IT WILL ALSO TURN OUT BEGGARS AND PROSTITUTES...A SIMPLE HEALTHY LIFE ON LIMITED INCOME IS THE ONLY REASONABLE IDEAL OF CIVILIZED FOLK."

(2) "THE IDEAL OF WORK - NOT IDLENESS, NOT DAWDLING, BUT HARD CONTINUOUS EFFORT AT SOMETHING WORTH DOING, BY A MAN SUPREMELY INTERESTED IN DOING IT, WHO KNOWS HOW IT OUGHT TO BE DONE AND IS WILLING TO TAKE INFINITE PAINS DOING IT."

(3) "THE IDEAL OF KNOWLEDGE - NOT GUESS WORK, NOT MERE CARELESS THEORY; NOT INHERITED RELIGIOUS DOGMA CLUNG TO BECAUSE OF FEAR AND INERTIA AND IN SPITE OF LOGIC, BUT CRITICALLY TESTED AND LABORIOUSLY GATHERED FACT MARTIALED UNDER SCIENTIFIC LAW AND FEEDING RATHER THAN CHOKING THE GLORIOUS WORLD OF FANCY AND IMAGINATION, OF POETRY AND ART, OF BEAUTY AND DEEP CULTURE."

"FINALLY, AND ESPECIALLY, THE IDEAL OF SACRIFICE. I ALMOST HESITATE TO MENTION THIS -- SO MUCH SENTIMENTAL TWADDLE HAS BEEN WRITTEN OF IT. WHEN I SAY ' SACRIFICE, I MEAN SACRIFICE. I MEAN A REAL AND DEFINITE SURRENDER OF PERSONAL EASE AND SATISFACTION. I EMBELLISH IT WITH NO THEOLOGICAL FAIRY TALES OF A REWARDING GOD OR A MILK AND HONEY HEAVEN. I AM NOT TRYING TO SCARE YOU INTO THE DUTY OF SACRIFICE BY THE FIRES OF A MYTHICAL HELL. I AM REPEATING THE STARK FACT OF SURVIVAL OF LIFE AND CULTURE ON THIS EARTH:

"ENTBEHREN SOLLST DU -- SOLLST ENTHEHREN."

(ENT-BEAREEN SAULTZ DUE -- SAULTZ ENT-TEREEN)

Thou shalt forego, shalt do without

THE INSISTENT PROBLEM OF HUMAN HAPPINESS IS STILL WITH US. WE AMERICAN NEGROES ARE NOT A HAPPY PEOPLE. WE FEEL PERHAPS AS NEVER BEFORE THE STING AND BITTERNESS OF OUR STRUGGLE. OUR LITTLE VICTORIES WON HERE AND THERE SERVE BUT TO REVEAL THE SHAME OF OUR CONTINUING SEMI-SLAVERY AND SOCIAL CASTE. WE ARE TORN ASUNDER WITHIN OUR OWN GROUP BECAUSE OF THE RASPING PRESSURE OF THE STRUGGLE WITHOUT. WE ARE AS A RACE NOT SIMPLY DISSATISFIED, WE ARE EMBODIED DISSATISFACTION.

TO INCREASE ABIDING SATISFACTION FOR THE MASS OF OUR PEOPLE, AND FOR ALL PEOPLE, SOMEONE MUST SACRIFICE SOMETHING OF HIS OWN HAPPINESS. THIS IS A DUTY ONLY TO THOSE WHO RECOGNIZE IT AS A DUTY. THE LARGER THE NUMBER READY TO SACRIFICE, THE SMALLER THE TOTAL SACRIFICE NECESSARY. NO MAN OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND TRAINING, WHO

PROPOSES TO FACE HIS PROBLEM AND SOLVE IT CAN HOPE FOR ENTIRE HAPPINESS. IT IS SILLY TO TELL INTELLIGENT HUMAN BEINGS: BE GOOD AND YOU WILL BE HAPPY. THE TRUTH IS TODAY, BE GOOD, BE DECENT, BE HONORABLE, AND SELF-SACRIFICING AND YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS BE HAPPY. YOU WILL OFTEN BE DESPERATELY UNHAPPY. YOU MAY EVEN BE CRUCIFIED, DEAD AND BURIED, AND THE THIRD DAY YOU WILL BE JUST AS DEAD AS THE FIRST. BUT WITH THE DEATH OF YOUR HAPPINESS MAY EASILY COME INCREASED HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION AND FULFILLMENT FOR OTHER PEOPLE - STRANGERS, UNBORN BABES, UNCREATED WORLDS. IF THIS IS NOT SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE, NEVER TRY IT -- REMAIN HOGS."[4]

TO THIS LIST OF GUIDING IDEALS, PERHAPS ONE MORE SHOULD BE ADDED, AND THAT IS THE IDEAL OF <u>RESPONSIBILITY</u>.

WE, AS LEADERS AND EDUCATORS, HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH OUR CHARGES ABOUT THE WORLD AS IT IS. THIS IS A PREREQUISITE TO HELPING PEOPLE DEVELOP A VISION OF THE WORLD AS WE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE. THE WORLD AS IT IS INCLUDES CERTAIN UNDENIABLE FACTS:

A) THAT BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES MUST STILL BE MORE QUALIFIED, BETTER PREPARED, AND MORE PERSEVERING TO GAIN THEIR PLACES IN THE WORKINGS OF SOCIETY - AND THAT RACISM IS STILL A FACT OF LIFE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS.

B) THAT POOR PEOPLE ARE STILL PLAYED OFF AGAINST EACH OTHER FIGHTING OVER THE SCRAPS OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PIE.

C) THAT THERE ARE STILL THOSE AMONG US WHO SUBSCRIBE TO AN ELITIST POINT OF VIEW WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NOT MADE IT ARE IN POVERTY THROUGH THEIR OWN SLOTH AND STUPIDITY. AND THAT THERE ARE STILL THOSE AMONG US WHO EXPLOIT OTHER BLACKS AND POOR PEOPLE FOR THEIR OWN ENRICHMENT.

D) THAT DISCIPLINE AND STRUGGLE AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR ADVANCEMENT.

E) THAT EACH OF US IS PART OF THE PROBLEM OR THE SOLUTION WHETHER WE RECOGNIZE IT OR NOT.

WE ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE FOR CONTINUITY OF OUR OWN WORK BY SEEKING OUT AND TRAINING BRIGHT, PROMISING AND DEDICATED YOUTH WHO CAN PROFIT FROM OUR EXPERIENCE, BUILD UPON IT AND MAKE STILL GREATER CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FUTURE.

THESE YOUNG PEOPLE, TOO, HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO SHOULDER. THEY MUST USE THEIR SKILLS, TRAINING, EDUCATION, DEGREES TO GET INTO A POSITION TO OPEN UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR LESS FORTUNATE BRETHREN. THEY HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES - OR IF THEY CHOOSE TO FRITTER AWAY THEIR TIME, TO WASTE THEIR GIFTS, TO FORFEIT THE FUTURE BY SPENDING THEIR TIME IN

MEANINGLESS FRIVOLITY, TO GET OUT OF THE WAY OF OTHERS WHO WILL TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE PRIVILEGES OF LEARNING.

FINALLY, WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO RISE ABOVE OUR DIFFERENCES OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND OPINION, TO JOIN TOGETHER IN A UNITED EFFORT TO TRULY DEMOCRATIZE THIS SOCIETY. THE CURRENT LIBERATION MOVEMENTS -- GREY PANTHERS, CHICANOS, PUERTO RICANS, WOMEN, YOUTH -- MAY PROVE CAPABLE OF LIBERATING EVERYONE FROM THE BITTER RESIDUE OF PAST FAILURE AND PRESENT FEAR. THE DEMANDS, FOR INSTANCE, BEING MADE BY MANY BLACKS, -- FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, FOR TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY, FOR FULL FUNDING, FOR DESEGREGATION, FOR INCREASED AID TO HIGHER EDUCATION -- ARE NOT NARROW AND SELF-SERVING. THEY ARE NEEDED BY ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY, AND ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY--RICH, POOR, BLACK, WHITE, YOUNG, OLD--WILL BENEFIT IF THEY ARE MET. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR US TO REMEMBER IS THAT THE STRUGGLE IS ABOUT SURVIVAL AS HUMAN BEINGS AND WE MUST ALL PARTICIPATE IN THAT STRUGGLE.

SATRE ARGUES THAT MAN HAS A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT HE IS AND DOES. THERE ARE NO VALUES EXTERNAL TO MAN, NO GIVEN HUMAN NATURE WHICH HE IS OBLIGED TO FULFILL. MAN CHOOSES HIS VALUES AND MAKES HIMSELF AND FOR THIS CHOICE, HE IS RESPONSIBLE. AND YET THERE IS NO NEED FOR DESPAIR. BECAUSE IT MAKES HIM ACUTELY AWARE OF HIS FREEDOM, MAN MAY CHOOSE DIFFERENT VALUES AND MAY CHOOSE TO BE A DIFFERENT PERSON. WE CAN SHAPE OUR OWN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE FUTURES. IT WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT IT CAN BE DONE.

INSTEAD OF REHASHING OLD PROBLEMS, RESTATING COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD ISSUES, LET US COALESCE AROUND ISSUES AND POLICIES. LET US STOP DEBATING AND DISCUSSING WHAT IS FAMILIAR AND KNOWN TO ALL OF US. LET US GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF DEVELOPING STRATEGIES, FORMING COALITIONS, BECOMING ADVOCATES FOR ENLIGHTENED AND PRAGMATIC POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND STRUCTURES WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. AND IN SO DOING LET US REMEMBER THE WORDS OF MACHIAVELLI:

> NEVER LET ANY GOVERNMENT IMAGINE THAT IT CAN CHOOSE PERFECTLY SAFE COURSES; RATHER, LET IT EXPECT TO HAVE TO TAKE VERY DOUBTFUL ONES BECAUSE IT IS FOUND IN ORDINARY AFFAIRS THAT ONE NEVER SEEKS TO AVOID ONE TROUBLE WITHOUT RUNNING INTO ANOTHER; BUT PRUDENCE CONSISTS IN KNOWING HOW TO DISTINGUISH THE CHARACTER OF TROUBLES AND, FOR CHOICE, TO TAKE THE LESSER EVIL."

OUR GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS, OUR POLITICIANS ALL KNOW ABOUT, HAVE READ AND REMEMBER MACHIAVELLI. WE SHOULD NOT FORGET HIS MEANING. OUR SELF-DETERMINATION MAY DEPEND UPON IT. WHAT I AM SAYING TO YOU IS NOT AN EASY TASK. AGAIN AS MACHIAVELLI REMINDS US:

> ".... IT MUST BE CONSIDERED THAT THERE IS NOTHING MORE DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT, NOR MORE DOUBTFUL OF SUCCESS, NOR MORE DANGEROUS TO HANDLE, THAN TO INITIATE A NEW ORDER OF THINGS. FOR THE REFORMER HAS ENEMIES IN ALL THOSE WHO PROFIT BY THE OLD ORDER, AND ONLY LUKEWARM DEFENDERS IN ALL THOSE WHO PROFIT BY THE NEW...."

FOOTNOTES

1. W.E.B. DuBois.

2. The State of Black America 1977. National Urban League, Inc., New York, New York, 1977.

3. Bicentennial Essay. By Daniel Bell, Ph.D., TIME Magazine, September 8, 1975.

4. W.E. Burghardt DuBois, Commencent Address to Howard University, "Education and Work." June 6, 1930. Printed in Howard University Bulletin, Vol. IX, January 1931, No. 5., Washington, D. C.